

FULL METAL CYBERPUNK

INTERFACE

ZERO



Jericho Rose



JERICHO ROSE

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JERICO ROSE

There's a new sound echoing in the streets. It's a dark, shimmering siren song seduced from a sleek, black guitar. Standing with seven other musicians — including percussion, cello, violins, synth, standing bass, tape loops, more guitars and more percussion — she is the mastermind behind the sound that has a growing base of devoted fans.

Her name is Lorna Jericho. And if you haven't heard of her yet, you haven't been paying attention.

Jericho got her start in Johnny Dark's band, Suicide Ball, writing fast, furious heavy metal punk. Her relationship with Dark was creative, volatile and well-covered by the Industry SOUNDfeeds. Their first album together, *kucufetah*, broke records all across the world. Three more records together built a small fortune for Dark, but his relationship with Jericho, and the world in general, was deteriorating.

Then, two years ago, she vanished. Dark filled her place with various guitarists, but the violent alchemy was missing. Sales and concert attendance began to fall.

Then, as if from nowhere, Jericho came back with a new band, a new sound and a new attitude. She began performing small clubs, putting on shows that put the word on the street. It was nothing at all like her previous work. Instead of abrupt three chord screamers, audiences found themselves entranced by fifteen-to-twenty minute soundscapes, carefully arranged and executed by master musicians.

No words. Just music and pictures flashed against a screen behind the band, shining against their faces as they play. The pieces are haunting, threatening, desperate, and panic-inducing. It is chamber music, but with guitars and drums and bass and all the instruments you expect to see in a rock or punk band.

I got a chance to talk to Jericho about her new direction just after her show at The Lead Boot.

You look exhausted.

It's hard work.

I can imagine. Fifteen minute suites.

I'm a fan of Mozart. I'm also a fan of GYBE! (Godspeed You Black Emperor!) I always had this music in the back of my head. I just never had a chance to do it.

With Johnny Black?

Yeah. With him.

What happened?

It was too much. The drugs, the hate. I mean, when I was younger, that sort of danger turned me on. But when you wake up and you don't know where you are and you have bruises and blood and you don't know where it came from...

Damn.

Yeah. And I had a friend, a good friend. He — I mean, he wanted to help me. I don't know what happened to him because I treated him like crap and he was gone one day. And when you wake up and the only person you have is, you know, you just wake up one day and say, "What am I doing here?"

Moment of clarity?

I've heard people talk about it and thought, "That's bullshit." But that's what it is. You don't even decide. It isn't a choice or a process. It's just a moment of, "I've got to get out of here."

Where did you go?

I don't want to talk about that. Some people kept me safe and got me cleaned up and I want to respect their anonymity.

But you did go somewhere.

Yeah, somewhere. And I got clean.

And now you have your own band.

"The Jericho Rose." Yeah.

Your idea?

Not really, no. I wanted to call the band something else, but Vince, the guy I co-write songs with now, he insisted. He came up with it. "Nobody knows who I am," he said. It made sense. People know who I am, so we use my name to get all of us famous.

Sounds like a plan.

That's the point of being famous, you know? Getting other people what they want. I mean, what's the point of it otherwise? Being famous for being famous? That's just public masturbation.

(Laughing) I see...

I mean, think about it. These people go out and do shit and don't wear underwear or have fights on the street. These are choices they're making to get on the vid. They aren't mistakes. They get rewarded for making dumb choices, so they make dumb choices. All they're doing is jerking off. And we're watching.

Your new material is almost entirely instrumental, but the videos you show and the titles of the songs are very cryptic.

Not if you're paying attention.

I know what you mean, I mean, you...

If you're paying attention, you know.

Very political.

Yeah.

Is that something else that changed while you were gone?

In a way, yeah. I mean, I've always known there was something wrong, you know? But it wasn't until I got off the drugs and started reading that I saw how f#&ed the world is. We're in trouble. Deep trouble.*

Why not write lyrics, then?

Music communicates in ways language cannot. It communicates anger, despair, hope, joy, love. All those things. I can write fear and communicate that with music. Then, someone can hear that music, read the title, and wonder, "What does that mean?" They have to go out and look. They have to find it themselves.

You're sending people on spirit quests?

(Laughs) Exactly. If you look for it yourself, it's your discovery. If someone else tells you, "This is the truth," then you have all those filters in your way. You find it yourself, it's your discovery.

It was then Jericho's manager interrupted the interview. He whispered in her ear and her face changed. She apologized for leaving so soon, got up and rushed off. I'm not exactly sure what happened, but she hasn't been seen in three days. Two concerts canceled with no explanation. Her manager hasn't answered any questions.

HOW TO USE THIS ADVENTURE

Jericho Rose appears to be a “lady vanishes” adventure, but it is really an introduction to a larger, more dangerous enemy. This is only a prelude. It’s a deadly prelude which will result in the heroes failing to rescue the damsel in distress and the heroes coming under the shadow of a powerful organization that will use them for its own goals. This is cyber noir. It is dark, bloody and nihilistic. But, there’s a little bit of hope. Just enough so the players can feel its warmth in their fingertips just before you take it away from them and crush it under your heel.

The Jericho Rose has no specific geographical location; you can place it in just about any urban setting you like. After singer Lorna Jericho goes missing, her manager hires our heroes to find her and bring her back safely.

Where has she gone? Well, there are three possible answers. I’ll provide the possibilities and you get to choose. All of them are linked together, a vast labyrinth of Lorna’s past that will eventually lead to the center, and to the truth.

Your three options are:

JOHNNY DARK

This one is pretty obvious. Dark wants Jericho back and he’s willing to do anything. Even kidnap her, drug her up and brainwash her. Even though this is the most obvious choice, it doesn’t have to be yours. Nor may it be the players’ first choice. They may think it’s too straight forward. “Where’s the plot twist?” There is no plot twist here. Dark wants his girl back. End of story. Except, that isn’t the end of it at all.

SCORPIO SAGE

Lorna mentioned “a friend” in her interview. That friend is journalist, Scorpio Sage. He was the one who got her off drugs, got her cleaned up and got her life back on track again. They were lovers for a short while and Sage never forgot that. Learning that her life was in danger, he grabbed her and took her out of the limelight. He didn’t know who he could trust (including her manager), so he made her just vanish. Or, so he thought.

THE COMPANY

“The Company” is a government contractor working in the realm of memetic weaponry: using ideas to convert, conform and control cultures. Through vids, billboards, interactive ads and other means, they inject concepts into societies, all for the highest bidder. They manipulate words and their meanings, changing attitudes and “assassinating” key figures through whisper campaigns. Through her contacts with Sage, Jericho’s last album, “Memetic Weapons” contained heavy clues leading its listeners toward discovering The Company. They saw it and grabbed her to find out how a “rock singer” discovered their secrets.

A BRANCHING STORY

The adventure is divided into Scenes. Scenes are geographically located, not chronologically listed. In other words, if your players want to check out Scene 3 before Scene 2, that’s just fine. However, each Scene does have Consequences listed at the end of it which may affect later Scenes.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

PETER JAMES WARREN

Jericho’s manager, Peter James Warren, is a huge man. Standing nearly six foot six with broad shoulders and a huge beard, his shaggy hair hanging over piercing, ice blue eyes. Before becoming a music manager, Warren was a professional wrestler. He learned the hard life of the road, saved his money, and when he was ready to retire, invested in business management. His third client, Lorna Jericho, has proven to be worth the investment.

Warren is a man who knows how to use his size and weight in a fight and in a negotiation. In fact, he puts little distance between the two. “Negotiation is just two men figuring out if they need to fight.” He speaks with a thick North English accent and uses so much slang that most Americans find his words difficult to translate... and he doesn’t care.

Warren fights for his clients, using his size and his skills to get what he wants. He has a very simple philosophy: “Artists don’t need to be cocked about.” He handles everything for his clients and protects them from what he calls, “the world’s worthless shits.”

His loyalty to Jericho can be expressed in the fact that the two have no contract; only a handshake agreement. “If it works, pay me,” he told her. “If it don’t, fire me.” His reputation alone got him the job. He goes wherever she goes, has broken arms and legs for her, cracked heads for her, and taken money out of his own wallet when a gig went bad. “If you get rich, I get rich,” he told her. “It’s as simple as that.”

Playing Warren is easy: just be the six foot six, three hundred pound ex-pro-wrestler/bouncer best friend who would break someone’s arm to protect you. Who would break someone’s leg if they didn’t pay you? Who would crack someone’s skull who tried to bootleg one of your concerts? And would buy you a drink after the show as he hands you 75% of the cut. And do it with a thick, undecipherable English accent.

JOHNNY DARK

Without his six inch boots, Dark stands a neat five foot five. His real name is Anthony Grabowski. His hair is normally dirty blonde, but he’s died it pitch black. His skin is lily white and his eyes are shifting shadows. He wears black velvet pants, white plume shirts and lots of gold and silver crosses. He’s had his voice altered so it can move from one register to another without any hiccups. When he speaks, it’s with an echoing growl. His black hair falls down his back and his goatee makes him look like a bastard child of Anton LaVey.

He drinks red wine from crystal goblets. He plays a custom Fender guitar he calls a “Shadowcaster.” And his dressing room is filled with girls who have scars on their wrists.

Dark believes in his own philosophy he calls “Romantic Nihilism.” It teaches its followers “the Three Laws.”

1. Everyone will eventually betray you.
2. Everyone steals from everyone else.
3. Do what you want now because you’ll soon be too old to do it.

His music, his art and everything else he does are guided by these principles. He doesn’t give a shit about you unless you are useful to him. He makes this perfectly clear to everyone he meets. He made a ton of money on his first two albums (kucufetah, lamentations of the unworthy), but his last two

(*harmins limonitic, your blood red kisses*) have seen sales slump. His addictions are starting to catch up with him and without Lorna Jericho's musical input, critics have said, "he's starting to sound like a Johnny Dark tribute band."

SCORPIO SAGE

His real name is Onyekachi Sy. He's black, stands around six foot, wears glasses and has dreads tied at his neck. He's in good shape. He was a lawyer, a public defender, a long time ago. Now, he's Scorpio Sage, an underground journalist publishing *The Black Hat Byte*, one of the first and biggest "virus sheets." A virus sheet is an expert sprite that hacks through your firewalls, gets into your system to tell you the underground gossip. "News whether you like it or not."

Unfortunately for Sage, The Company is on to him, and they've deposited fifty million in his account. Why? To bring them Lorna Jericho. Sage did not get a formal offer. One day, he woke up and there was fifty million in his bank account and an email saying, "Bring her to us, or it stays."

Of course, the government would like to know where that fifty million came from. How he got it, who he got it from. And there's also all the eafterburn in the trunk of his car. And there's even a body — someone he knows, but they aren't telling — that will be found by police in 48 hours. But all of this will disappear if he brings Jericho.

When you play Sage, keep in mind that he's an honest man in a dishonest world. Fighting against the stream isn't easy, and eventually, it gets to even the best of us. He's weary, but not beaten. He knows what The Company is up to and he wants to stop them, but how? The only way is information. That's the key. Information. You have to shoot it out into the world like a thousand burning shotguns. Most will ignore the sound, like how they ignore sounds in the night, but others will pay attention. And if enough people pay attention, then maybe — just maybe — you can hit someone who *can* do something.

VIRUS SHEET (EXPERT SPRITE)

Attributes: Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Hacking (Data Mining, Firewall Penetration, Systems Control) d8, Notice d6

Virtual Pace: 6; **Firewall:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Engrams: Sprite Armor (1), Sprite Firewall (1), Skill Specialization Bonus (Firewall Penetration) +2

TACHYON RES

Tachyon RES is the key to this adventure. It's the piece of the puzzle the players need for everything they learn to make sense.

"Tachyon" was the test name for software developed by Lindwood Industries. The tests began about ten years ago. With funding from the military, Lindwood built a "reality expansion software" that would enhance senses, reflexes in subjects with neural implants. Unfortunately, the tests were unsuccessful: subjects developed debilitating addictions to the RES and while their reflexes and timing did improve, the subjects were also lost in their own imagined realities. The government shut the project down and confiscated everything. At least, that's what they thought.

Two years later, Tachyon RES (sometimes called "the RES" or "Tack RES" or just "Tack") started showing up on the streets as a "neural party drug." It became hot with younger users, but when musicians got hold of it, the popularity of the drug exploded. Whoever was distributing RES put a kill date in the software, causing it to self-purge from a user's system after a certain date. This required users to go back to their pusher and buy more. But after a while, users started experiencing lesser experiences. They were burning out on the drug and needed more. Sure enough, Tach RES updates started showing up on the scene, promising better and more powerful "performance and experience."

And just as the first update started hitting the streets, mods appeared: individually hacked versions of RES started showing up, all with their own promises and effects. The Feinberg Hack was one of the first and it was quickly followed up with hacks called "Einstein Dances," "Tolman Special" and others. Most of these were incredibly dangerous, overloading neural processors, turning users into brain-dead zombies.

Now, with dozens of flavors of RES to choose from. The street is a candy store where you fry your brain on your favorite fantasies. All custom made and inside your own head. Of course, once you've tasted the candy, you always want more.

A MESSY ENDING

Fair warning: this adventure does not end well. In fact, the ending is messy, at best.

I wrote *The Jericho Rose* as a "set up." The heroes in this story do not save the girl, nor do they get away clean. Instead, they end up being locked in with a ruthless, vicious corporation with bombs in their heads. This sets up your heroes on a long-term campaign, both working for and against the chief antagonist.

The heroes will go looking for Jericho, eventually find her (what's left of her), and have enough motivation to hate-hate-hate the folks who abducted her. Then, they'll find themselves in a position of having to work for the same folks... or their heads will explode.

It's a nasty set up, but it should provide enough motivation for your players to find ways to stop the corporation they're working for.

Yes, the heroes fail. But this is noir. That's what happens. They fail on the way to victory.



SCENE 1: THE MEETING

Warren contacts the heroes through a convenient means. Surely, your heroes have contacts. Warren talks to some people, they talk to some people, and those people talk to *your* people. A friend of a friend. He can also have a direct connection to one of the heroes. He's done a lot of business on the streets, hired a lot of bodyguards, medics, and techboys. One of the heroes has probably done work for him in the past. That means he'll probably want to work with them again.

Warren's office sits in one of the better parts of town, but not the high end district. He's money sharp, and that means he isn't willing to pay more just to sit next to the snobs uptown. He always has a bodyguard with him, "Big Jim" Graham. The two worked together on the pro-wrestling circuit. "Big Jim" is actually smaller than Warren. Much smaller. He stands only five foot eleven, but he's also built like a tank. Both Warren and Graham can take care of themselves.

The inside of Warren's office are four walls of photographs: Warren and superstars. If they're famous, they're on Warren's wall. And there's Warren, his big arm around them, smiling under his thick black beard. All the photos are signed, "Thanks PJ!" or "You're the best, Pete!" or some other compliment. The one on his desk right now is a picture of him and Lorna Jericho. They're standing together smiling, she's holding a bottle of water and he's looking like a proud father. It's signed, "For believing in me. All My Love, Lorna."

When the characters enter, he's holding the picture. He says nothing to them as they come in. Then, finally, after one of them speaks, he says something. He says it like he hasn't heard them speak at all:

PETER JAMES WARREN (WC)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation 10, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: +0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9(2); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 6

Hindrances: Loyal, Quirk (Thick North English accent)

Edges: Brawny, Brawler, Bruiser, Martial Artist

Cyberware: Cyberlegs [Kangaroo System, Ligament Enhancement, Enhanced Articulation], Muscle Augmentation

Gear: ED Business Suit (+2), brass knuckles (Str+d4)

"I bought her a gun."

Warren will fill them in on the situation. There's a list of the most likely questions below. You may have to improvise... aw, who am I kidding? You *will* have to improvise. Your players will think of things you and I could *never* anticipate. But, I've done my best and even consulted my own players for what kind of questions *they* would ask. Here's all the help I can give you.

"WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU SAW HER?"

After the show, at the Dark Room. She used to play there when she and Dark were small time. Big come back show. Place was packed. You couldn't get in. I crushed a guy's hand for trying to sell her old tunes there. The guy squealed. She was in the dressing room — man, that ain't no dressing room. It's a closet. Seven people in the band in that tiny little thing. So, she's smilin and needin a change, so I clear out the men's room and she changes in there. I ask her where she's goin and she tells me "To see a friend." I suppose that's the reporter she keeps talkin about.



“WHAT REPORTER?”

Scorpio Sage. The guy in charge of that DATAfeed. What’s it called? I can’t remember. I looked the guy up. Guy’s a white piece of paper. But his INFOdump is all political. The corps run the governments. That kind of shite. I tried to get my thumb on him but he’s dodgy, you know? When she got sober, she got all political. Sage had something to do with that. Never seen him. Nobody has, I think. ‘Cept Lorna. She’s seen him. (He says the next line as if he is a disapproving father.) And he’s seen her.

“HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?”

I know it because I seen the way her eyes light up when she talks about ‘im. Let’s change the subject, all right? It ain’t Sage that took her.

“HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?”

Because Sage ain’t got nothin t’gain from it. That’s how I know. You want to know who took ‘er, you look for the one who’s got somefin ta gain.

“DID YOU TAKE HER?”

Why would I do that? I got money in this. Ain’t no money in her disappearing. I got ta cancel gigs, and that costs money. I got to pay musicians and that costs money. I got ta pay her rent and that costs money. This ain’t doin’ nofin but ‘urtin’ me, ya see?

“WHAT IF SHE JUST HASN’T CONTACTED YOU?”

She hasn’t talked in days. Two days. That ain’t right. She always lets me know where she is and where she’s goin’. She was always afraid. Said Dark’s boys was followin’ her. Gave her a bodyguard, but when she went to meet Sage, she said she din’ want one. “He’ll keep me safe,” she said. Well, look what happened now. And I can’ raise that Sage bastard at all. Gone dark, he has. Maybe who got her got him, too.

“WHAT ABOUT HER TAP?”

It’s been shut down. Can’t ping it. Can’t trace it. Right disturbin’ mates...She never logs off. Says Hyper Reality is her new buzz. Better than the shite she used ta pump into her body.

“CAN WE SEE HER APARTMENT?”

Yeah. I have the access code. I’ll give it to you.

“HAVE YOU CONTACTED THE POLICE?”

You kidding? As soon as a copper steps within ten feet of this thing, someone’s gonna show up with a briefcase full of money and guns and they’re gonna tell me, “I’m sorry, sir, but we couldn’t find anything.” What good are the police?

“WHO DO YOU THINK TOOK HER?”

Dark. That bastard. He wants her back. Back under his thumb. He wants her because he’s nothin’ without her. He’s shite. The bastard. I’d break his neck if I thought I could get away with it. Or just his hands. His wee, soft hands. Bastard says he came from the streets. He came from the streets all right. He came from the gold-paved streets up on the bleedin’ hill with a bloody silver spoon in his bloody mouth. Never worked an honest day in his life. Daddy and mommy sent him to school and he flunked out so they kept him in money while he “chased his dream.” Then, he met Lorna and everything worked. She gave him music and he gave her drugs and kept her that way. Five bleedin’ years. Wasn’t for me, she would have never gotten out.

“WHAT’S YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JOHNNY DARK?”

I used to be his manager. Me and Lorna got out of that. Bleedin’ wanker. He used her until she was nearly dead, then he kicked her to the curb for some skeleton tart all dressed up like Halloween.

“HOW DID LORNA GET SOBER?”

She did it. I just locked her up. I locked her up in my place and got a doctor and she hurt for a month while the doc pumped the crap out of her and gave her clean blood. He said she would have died if she kept going. Then it was days and days of VR therapy. Don’t know how she handled that. Lorna was jacked in for months of VR time, mates.

“WHERE CAN WE FIND SCORPIO SAGE?”

Bleedin’ hell if I know. I had a contact with him, but that went dry. I pushed the lad, but he wouldn’t give me noffin’.

“CAN WE TALK TO THE CONTACT?”

Hell no. If I sent you after him, he’d just run. No good there. And the boy ain’t talkin’.

“HOW ABOUT WE TRY ANYWAY?”

You can try. Here’s his place. Stuck in one of them coffin flats, you know? Just a bed and a locker and that’s it? One loo for the whole floor. Here’s the address and the numbah. But don’t tell him I sent ya. He ain’t afraid of me. Or, whatever’s got him scared is a whole lot more scarier than I am. And that’s got to be somefin’ damn scary, right.

“WHO DOES HAVE SOMETHING TO GAIN FROM IT?”

Just about anyone. I mean, she’s a name, isn’t she? Ransom is what I’m thinkin’, but I haven’t gotten any kind of ransom note yet. Just stick with Dark. He’s the one who took her. I know it.

“WHERE CAN WE FIND DARK?”

He’s at his folks’ place, probably. They died and he got it. Didn’t even have to pay for it, the bastard. Here’s the address. You’ll find him there. If you can’t get in, mention my name. If that don’t work, you can find him at his club, *Le Noir*. But, it may be harder to see him at his club than his house.

“WHERE DOES SHE USUALLY SPEND HER TIME WHEN SHE’S NOT PERFORMING?”

At her apartment. She’s always writing. Her and Vince, one of the other guitarists. Here’s the place. You should check it out.

“WHAT’S THE PAY?”

I’ll pay you fair. Whatever it takes. I’ve got a lot of coin and I’ll spend it to get her back. Just... just get her back. Anything I got is yours.

FOLLOW-UP

Once the scene is done, the heroes really have two leads to follow:

1. See Johnny Dark. Go to *Scene 3: Johnny Dark*.
2. Head to Jeroich’s Apartment. See *Scene 2: Jericho’s Apartment*.

SCENE 2: JERICHO'S APARTMENT

Jericho lives in a modest apartment in the bad part of town. Its high security, so getting in without an access code will be tough. However, since they met with Warren, they probably have the code and can get in to the building and Jericho's apartment with ease.

Breaking in is tough. Jericho's building relies on a sophisticated network (CAN, Firewall: 8) and the doors are all managed with an eight digit hyper lock. Approaching a door causes the hyper object to appear, waiting for input. Brute force is not really an option, since working through the number of possible combinations, takes time, a lot of time.

With out the code the only real option is to hack the object. The lock relies on the building's network for security, using its firewall. The biggest downside is that a any failed hacking attempt notifies the authorities who arrive in 2d6 minutes to investigate. Yeah, this is a tough nut to crack.

Inside the place is cluttered, but it appears no-one has been here for a while. There are no signs of forced entry or a search.

It's small. You walk in the front door and you're in a kitchen that's barely large enough for one person. The entryway opens up into the living/bedroom. She has a mattress on the floor. There's a sliding door that leads to the toilet and shower. She has clothes piled on top of each other and a cloud network devoted to recording and mixing music. The fridge is filled with vegetables and fruits — most of which are starting to go bad. She also has a holopet: a holographic cat who wanders around the room. Although it cannot be touched, it responds to petting and will come when called.

Jericho's network is encrypted, so getting in requires a Hacking skill check to penetrate the firewall (HAN, Firewall: 5). Once inside the network, the heroes find a cornucopia of songs: some finished, some half-finished, some just started. The most recent song (the one she's been working on) is called "tachres blues." Like most of her songs, it's an instrumental, but there are a few sampled words if they listen all the way through. It sounds like an interview with a man on the street. City noises can be heard in the background. He says,

"The res, man? Yeah. That's rich man's junk. Ain't no poor man gonna get the res. You won't see it down here, man. You won't see it on the street. You'll only find that up high, in the clouds, where they can look down and dream and fear that they're only one step away from fallin' down with the rest of us. Or jumpin'. Or get pushed."

A successful Investigation roll reveals an encrypted file on her network: dialogue with Scorpio Sage and others regarding The Company and the street drug Tachyon RES. The important dialogue can be found in a nearby sidebar.

Also on Jericho's system is the contact info for Scorpio Sage. Actually, it's the procedure for meeting Scorpio Sage. He tells her, "Use the smart phone I gave you. Call the number for "Judith" and leave a message. I will text you where to meet me." To find the smart phone, the heroes will have to search the tiny room. She keeps it taped to the inside of the tank in the toilet.

If the team's hacker continues to poke around on the network, have her make a Investigation check at a -2 penalty. If she succeeds, the hacker finds a sub-network on the cloud

JERICHO AND SAGE'S CONVERSATION

Jericho: I always thought it was leaked from the government.
Sage: It wasn't leaked. They were robbed.
Jericho: Who?
Sage: An MC.
Jericho: A what?
Sage: A merc-corp. Mercenary Corporation.
Jericho: What's that?
Sage: A company with no nationality. No loyalty to any country. They can do what they want because they have no accountability.
Jericho: This sounds hard to believe.
Sage: Think about it. You buy an island. You hire out to the highest bidder. Government wants torture done? They hire you. They want ethically questionable research? They hire you.
Jericho: Fuck.
Sage: It started with corps putting money in other countries. Then, they figured out if they could put their money there, why not just buy their own land and run things the way they want?
Jericho: What about international law?
Sage: They're a *corp*, not a *country*. So national laws don't apply to them. Only corporate ones.
Jericho: So the MC got a hold of the RES and started distributing it?
Sage: Yeah.
Jericho: Which one?
Sage: I'm still figuring that one out.
Jericho: Got a lead?
Sage: Had a lead. Haven't heard from him.
Jericho: Hey, almost time for the show. Got to go.
Sage: Be careful.
Jericho: It's my new #1 rule.

with tougher Firewalls. If the character wishes to hack the sub-net, she must make a Hacking roll at -4. Success reveals 1d4 hacking engrams. Choose any engrams rated 2 AMS or less (see **Hacking** in *Interface Zero 2.0* rulebook). The engrams are configured to work on Lorna's TAP, but characters can make a Knowledge (Programming) roll to reprogram the engrams to work on their TAP. Reprogramming the engram(s) takes eight hours per level of AMS, so an engram with 2 AMS will take 16 hours to reconfigure.

This should tell anyone in the group that Lorna Jericho was more than just a rock star. The girl has (had) real skills.

They'll also find a Datafile on The Company:

```
MEMETIC WEAPONRY
14241 ASSOCIATE'S WAY
THEY TELL YOU HOW TO HOPE/THEY TELL YOU HOW
TO VOTE
THEY TELL YOU HOW TO FEAR/THEY TELL YOU WHO
TO FANTASIZE ABOUT
AND IT'S ALL YOUR IDEA
CONTRACTS WITH ADVERTISING. A SHOE
COMMERCIAL, A BAKING POWDER COMMERCIAL,
A MEDICINE COMMERCIAL ALL HAVE IDENTICAL
PHRASES AND IMAGES. THESE AREN'T
COMMERCIALS FOR SHOES OR BAKING POWDER OR
MEDICINE. THEY'RE SIGNALS. WEAPONS.
DONTRUSTDONTRUSTDONTRUST
```


SMART PHONES

In 2090 most people just use the voice, text, and video conferencing software installed in their Tendril Access Processors if they want to reach someone. That said, it's perfectly fine (and even wise) to use a low-tech device like a smart phone. Most of the satellite networks governing the use of the phones are antiquated and off-line, but there are a few still in orbit that can be hacked and used, if you can find them (Investigation or Streetwise rolls are most appropriate here).

These items are hard to get, requiring a Streetwise (Black Market) roll at a -2 penalty. The phones themselves are dirt cheap, costing only 20 credits, but to actually use them, someone has to hack the satellite network, and activate it. These are old Corporate Access Networks, but only have the stats of a Public Access Network.

- **Defense Rating:** 2-4 (default 2)
- **Die Type:** d4
- **Damage Dice:** 2d4 (nonlethal damage only)
- **Toughness:** 4 (Extra)

On the desk scattered among some music scores is a note.

You see it, you hear it. You never stop seeing it, you never stop hearing it. You wake up on Monday and you aren't you anymore. You're them.

FOLLOW-UP

1. If the heroes use the instructions to contact Sage, they will receive a text asking, "Where did we last meet?" The heroes have no way of knowing this information. They can make a guess, but because they do not give the right info, there will be no reply. This will put Sage on guard and make him difficult to find and talk to later. They can try to convince Sage that they are looking for Jericho themselves. He will be skeptical, but the right approach may convince him. Go to *Scene 5: Meeting Sage*
2. This is a great place for an ambush. If Johnny Dark called in an ambush, they can do it here. The room is so small, all you have to do is throw in a couple of grenades to take out everyone in the room. The apartment is on the third floor, so jumping out the window is going to cause some broken bones.
3. The heroes have a lead on Tachyon RES. Maybe this is a good time to get some info on that.
4. If the heroes find Jericho's hidden CPU, they may want to check out the address. Move to *Scene 8: Associates Way*.

SCENE 3: JOHNNY DARK

Dark's place is a huge mansion in the rich part of the city. Sixteen rooms, four floors, library, two pools, Jacuzzi, three garages surrounded by acres of land... it's a flashback to a century ago when the Internet barons took over and ruled the world.

There's an electric fence with a gate and a guard. Getting in without going through the gate will be difficult (and illegal). Mentioning Warren's name does get our heroes by the gate, however, unless they turn up the obnoxiousness, in which case, the guard will tell them to take a hike.

Once inside, the heroes see that most of the place is empty. No furniture, no wall hangings. Even the chandeliers are gone.

The fact of the matter is Dark has been slowly selling the remains of the house to pay for his drug habit.

They'll be escorted by an armed bodyguard to the indoor swimming pool. The room looks like a cavern carved out of solid rock. A Zen garden via Frank Lloyd Wright. Dark lays by the pool in his bed (that he's had moved into the room) with two empty bottles and a third in his hand, nearly empty. Sunglasses and a black robe and black swim trunks. A woman sleeps next to him. She's naked, but slightly covered. They are on the other side of the pool from him. If they try to get closer, the guard holds them back.

He asks, "Are you the cops?" If nobody has any official status, he laughs at them. "If you aren't the cops, then I don't have to talk to you about Jericho." He will say this whether or not they have brought up the subject of Lorna Jericho.

Whatever the heroes ask him next, he replies, "What are you going to give me for my time?" If they offer nothing, he will blow them off. "Then get lost."

He tells them, "I get paid by the minute, man. A thousand per minute. You can ask whatever you want, but I want the cash up front."

If they put up the cash, start a stop watch. Keep *real time* of the conversation and charge the heroes appropriately.

If the heroes don't cash up, Dark tells dismisses them. "I don't have time for you or that bitch Jericho." He will say this whether or not the heroes have brought up Jericho before or told him why they are there.

Obviously, the heroes have questions for Dark. If they're willing to pay, he might answer them. If he gets annoyed, he'll



string the questioning out for time, taking as long as thirty seconds to answer, smiling the whole time.

“HOW DID YOU KNOW LORNA IS MISSING?”

The music biz is small. Lots of echoes in a tiny room. I hear things.

“WHERE WERE YOU WHEN SHE DISAPPEARED?”

Here. (Shrugs at unconscious woman) With her. And my guards. They’ll attest to me being here. I’m even on the surveillance tapes.

“CAN WE SEE THOSE TAPES?”

Not without a warrant, love.

“IF YOU DIDN’T TAKE HER, WHO DO YOU THINK DID?”

I don’t know and I don’t care.

“WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE YOU?”

I don’t care if you do or you don’t. You aren’t cops. (Picks up the phone.) But I can call them if you want.

“WHERE WERE YOU WHEN JERICO DISAPPEARED?”

Here. With her. (Gestures at the woman.) And about twenty of my bodyguards. You can ask them if you want. Or don’t. I couldn’t care less.

In short, Dark won’t give them any answers. At least, any *useful* answers. They have nothing on him and he knows it.

FOLLOW-UP

1. As they leave, one of the bodyguards bumps into one of the heroes. “Sorry,” he says. But he also drops something in their hand. It’s a small note that reads, “Butcher’s place. 9:00 PM.” See *Scene 4: Butcher’s Place, 9:00 PM*
2. After their visit, Dark calls on some contacts. He doesn’t like strangers in his house accusing him of something he may or may not have done. He’ll ask for a hit on the heroes and he’ll get it. A few folks owe him favors. Big folks. Dark runs a very lucrative import business alongside his music business. Unfortunately, he’s become a customer of his own product. This means he has a lot of cash coming in and even more of it going down his spine. See *Scene 6: The Hit*
3. If his hit doesn’t work, he’ll panic and lock up his castle. He’s beyond paranoid at this point (thanks to his drug habit) and he’ll shoot anyone who comes into his home. Shoot first, pay the cops later. See *Scene 7: Dark’s Castle*.

SCENE 4: BUTCHER’S PLACE, 9:00 PM

Butcher’s Place is a dirty, skunky biker bar that serves dirty, skunky beer. It’s in a part of town that Dark would never think of going to. That’s why the bodyguard sent the heroes here.

The bodyguard’s name is Louis Valdez. He doesn’t have a “street name,” or a “handle.” He’s not into all of that. He wears a crucifix around his neck and his has connections to the homeboys who still lurk the streets. Valdez is a good contact for street gangs if the heroes are looking to expand in that area, but right now, he just wants to talk about Jericho.

When the heroes arrive, they’re greeted by a group of homeboys. The homies want the heroes to know that they’re watching them and that they’re packing. “Keep your hands

JOHNY DARK (WC)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Perform (Singing) d10, Persuasion d10, Shooting d4, Taunt d8

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6, Parry: 4; **Toughness:** 5; **Firewall:** 6; **Strain:** 1

Hindrances: Arrogant, Habit (Major: Afterburn), Stubborn

Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Filthy Rich

Cyberware: Voice Modulator

Gear: AGA Thunderbolt (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8+1; RoF 1; Shots 11; AP 4, Semi-Auto), Exclusively tailored clothing

VOICE MODULATOR

The character’s larynx is replaced allowing the character to manipulate his pitch and volume beyond normal ranges. A character can produce sounds in the full vocal range from Soprano to Bass and can increase the volume of his voice by four times. **Strain:** 1

where we can see ‘em,” they’ll say. All of them look like they know what they’re doing. No posers here.

They’ll bring the heroes to the back of the bar — still in plain sight of everyone involved — to Valdez. He’s sitting in a booth big enough for one or two more people. Everyone else has to stand. The homeboys surround the booth, making a wall of muscle and metal between Valdez and the rest of the bar.

Valdez is not tall — only five foot eleven — but he’s built like a brick. He’s tatted from top to bottom. He has the word MEXICAN written across his chest. Valdez used to be Jericho’s bodyguard. Of all the mercs and men Dark had, he trusted Valdez. That’s because Valdez is a family man, a devout Christian and a man of his word. He’s also about forty years old, but you couldn’t tell. He works out every day and eats right. He hasn’t got any implants. He doesn’t believe in them. He doesn’t like profanity, he doesn’t like swearing and he doesn’t like cursing. He doesn’t smoke, he doesn’t drink and he doesn’t do drugs. He’s got “X”s tattooed across the backs of his hands, if that doesn’t give the heroes a clue. And he discourages his boys from doing the same thing.

When the heroes tell him they’re working for Warren, he’ll confirm that. When he does, he’ll open up to them. Until then, he doesn’t give them any straight answers.

HOW DO YOU KNOW JERICO?

I used to work for that punk, Dark. You know what his real name is? Anthony. Boy’s got serious problems, and I mean serious. I was her bodyguard. He trusted me. So, he put me in charge of watching her. Man, he kept her messed up. I kept trying to keep her out of that junk, but it wasn’t no good.

USED TO WORK FOR DARK?

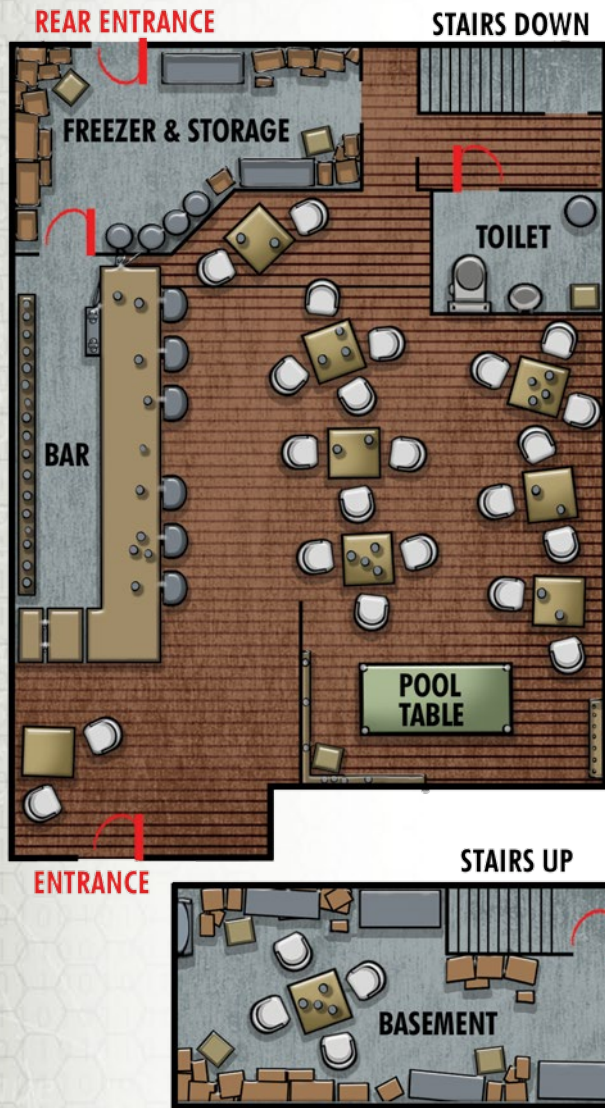
Yeah. I know the crew. When you showed up, they called me. I came by to smell you out. See which side you were on.

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

I’m on Lorna’s side. How ‘bout you?

WHY DID YOU WORK FOR DARK?

He paid good. I turned the cash around and put it to fixing my neighborhood. I don’t care what the rich folks do with their own lives, but down here, you bring the bread, home, you know what I’m saying? Dark’s a junkie, but if his money keeps a school open, I’ll take it. I keep the street clean down here, you know?



VALDEZ (WC)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d8, Throwing d6
Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7; **Firewall:** —; **Strain:** 0
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal, Unplugged
Edges: Brawler, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Command, Connections (Gangs), Inspire, Martial Artist, No Mercy
Gear: Foley Arms Watchdog (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8; RoF 1; Shots 12; AP 2, Semi-auto)

VALDEZ'S CREW (10)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6
Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8(3); **Firewall:** 4; **Strain:** 4
Hindrances: Greedy, Mean
Edges: Combat Reflexes, Steady Hands
Cyberware: Cyberweapon (Str+d4), Fight or Flight, Subdermal Armor
Gear: Urban Punk Combat Jacket (+2), Hostile Takeover HT-9 (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto), Wasteland Trader's Shillelagh Havoc Stick (Str+d6; Knockback)

doing it out in the open. You can't do that. They'll make you vanish, man. Make you vanish like history.

Look, man. This is serious, her going gone. I helped her get out the first time. Me and Scorpio, man. We got her out. But now she's gone and nobody knows where she went.

SCENE 5: MEETING SAGE

The heroes have two ways of meeting Sage.

First, they can use the information Warren gave them in *Scene 1: The Meeting*

Second, using the contact method they found in Scene 2, they can try to get in touch with him and convince them they are trying to find Jericho themselves.

Regardless, Sage will be *extremely* cautious when meeting the heroes. He's nearly paranoid, and for good reason: he Company is looking for him, and he knows it.

The most likely place to meet Sage is in a public place. At least, that's where he'll agree to meet the heroes. He picks a restaurant. The place is called Da Vinci's: a high scale, high price, high security restaurant on the rich side of town. You need a credit check just to get through the door. No guns. No weapons. No cameras. If they can't take the time to get in, then Sage isn't willing to talk to them.

When the heroes arrive, he's sitting at a table alone. He's wearing dark shades and a black suit, eating cheese-stuffed ravioli. "Every once in a while, I walk among the blind," he explains. "Reminds me what they say about the man with one eye. And the ravioli reminds me of what I eat at home. Except it costs about a hundred dollars less and comes out of a can."

Despite his bravado, Sage is really a coward. He's brave enough behind his *nom de plume*, but when push comes to shove, he will sell out his best friend to save his own skin. Which is what he may have done with Lorna. He's a paper tiger, a convenient revolutionary. He makes a lot of money doing what he's doing and he's not going to jeopardize it. He

WHY ARE YOU ON LORNA'S SIDE?

Because she's legit. She believes what she believes. I don't mind disagreement 'cause that's what makes the world go 'round man. You got what you believe and I got what I believe and we can talk, you know. That's good. But when you got spin, when you got lies backing you up, you got nothing and I want nothing to do with you. You straight up with me, we can disagree and we got respect. You got lies, there's no respect there. Jericho, she earned my respect.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE IS?

I thought you might have an idea.

WHY SHOULD WE TELL YOU?

Because she's in trouble. She's been asking questions all over the street, man. Asking about the RES. (This is an opportunity to fill the players in on Tachyon RES if they don't know already.) You can't go asking about the RES, man. That kind of talk will get you double duty killed, you know? Girl's in trouble.

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

She's asking the right kind of questions and those are the wrong kinds of questions. Word is out. Mercs got money in their eyes looking for her. You can't have a revolution in the street, man. You gotta go Che on them. Guerilla style. She's



has an audience, he tells them what they want to hear and they throw money at him. In his heart, Sage may believe what he's saying about overthrowing the corps and bringing justice to the streets, but even if he does believe it, he's not going to risk anything important to get it done. There's more money in yelling about problems than there is in solving them.

When the heroes ask him their first question, regardless of what it is, he goes off on a rant.

That's a good question, but it's missing the point. The real issue here is how something like this could have happened in the first place, and I'll tell you why. Because what used to be true about North America is no longer true. Home of the free and land of the brave? What's free anymore? Nothing....at least Not in the NAC.

Freedom means you've got nothing left to lose. And bravery? You see what happens on the streets? Some motherfucker kills some other motherfucker for his shoes and everyone pretends nothing happened. They just keep on walking, too fucking afraid of their own fucking shadows to even look up from their shoes.

That's how this shit happens.

The big, bad god of the city looks down on all of us and reminds us that the proper petition is fear and obedience. Don't ask questions. You see what happened to this motherfucker over here? This motherfucker over

here, he asked questions. You see what happened to him? That's what happens to motherfuckers who get curious. Curiosity kills cats. Cats like you and me. That's why I gotta do what I do, man. I gotta ask questions. Cause if I don't, I'm just another one of the slaves, like these motherfuckers here.

They think they've got it all in the palm of their hand, but they don't. They've just sold their souls to the highest bidder. Look at em. They say they're content, but they're afraid. You know why you never see those motherfuckers in the bad part of town? You know why? Because it's a reminder of the hell they're going to if they ever ask where their paychecks come from. It's a reminder of the hell their workers live in. Minimum wage? That's slave wage.

Slavery never died.. Hell, it's alive and well. Just look around. These are the masters. Workers are the slaves. Just keep them watching the vid so they don't notice. The so-called American dream ain't no dream, man. It's a nightmare. It's a nightmare you can't wake up from. And they hold you down and shove it down your throat. They make you believe that one day, you'll be like them. You'll have it all.

You're willing to put up with shit now because one day, that lottery ticket is gonna deliver you from your life. Well, it ain't gonna happen. Ain't never gonna happen. They make sure of that. And this is the truth Jericho and I were gonna throw over all the world. Like a shotgun to the face. Wake up the world. But the motherfuckers got her. And now, it's back to square one.

She had the voice. She had the face. She had the talent. People listened to her. But they shut that up fast. Soon as they heard that voice, they knew they had to shut it up. You'll probably find her in a dumpster somewhere, strung up and brain dead. They won't kill her. That means she just disappears. No, they got to kill hope. They've got to beat it, rape it and leave it on the side of the road, wrapped in duct tape and plastic for some poor motherfucker to find.

She won't be dead, but she'll be useless. Cause that's what hope is man. That's what they want hope to be. Useless. You can't find fear with hope. You've got to fight it with motherfuckin' fire.

When he's done with his rant, the heroes can try asking him more questions. He just shakes his head.

I told you. You can't fight like this. Clues and pieces of paper and all that shit. It's like Chicago, man. Everybody knows where the booze is, but nobody wants to cross

SCORPIO SAGE (WC)

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Hacking d10, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Programming) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Repair d6, Shooting d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6(1); **Firewall:** 7; **Strain:** 2

Hindrances: Curious, Owned (The Company)

Edges: Cutter, Hacker, Investigator

Cyberware: Enhanced Neural Net

Gear: Urban Punk Street Soldier Combat Thredz (+1), Hostile Takeover HT-9 (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d6; Shots 5; AP 1, Semi-Auto), T-APP Firewall 4th Dimension Security

Capone. Everybody knows where the disease comes from. Nobody's got the cuts to cut it out. So we all just sick.

Sage never answers any questions directly. He doesn't want to. He's got an act to keep up and he's willing to dodge questions with his rhetoric until he can't anymore. If they press him, he'll say:

Look, I can point you in the right direction, but I can't walk that path for you. I've got to keep underground. I can't let them see my face. I can't let them know who I am. They know who I am, the signal goes down, and I can't afford that. The world can't afford that. And if I give you something, they'll track it back to me. Ain't no way that's gonna happen. You enjoy your million dollar salads, now. And remember, they're all covered in the sweat of the suckers who bought that old North American dream.

Then, he leaves.

SCENE 6: THE HIT

So, a hit squad is coming for our heroes. Just who sends the hit squad is up for grabs. Of course, the hit squad could get sent by the person who has Jericho or it could get sent by someone who thinks the heroes are nosy and need to be shut up. In other words, you can use the hit squad as a clue (the players are getting closer to the truth) or as a red herring. You have a few options.

JOHNNY DARK

He's the obvious choice. He doesn't like what the heroes are up to and he wants to get them to shut up. Whether or not he's got Jericho, he doesn't like them poking around in his business.

SCORPIO SAGE

Sage doesn't like how close the heroes got to him, so he hired a hit squad to take them out. If they got close to him, that means the Company can get close to him and he doesn't want that.

THE COMPANY

If the Company sends a hit squad, it will be through Sage or Dark. If the heroes have been reckless and gotten the Company's attention, they can give either of these boys the order to get rid of them... or else. That way, they keep their hands clean and point everything at Sage or Dark.

USING THE HIT SQUAD

How the hit squad goes after the heroes depends entirely on what you want. Do you want to scare them? Hurt them? Capture them? It's up to you. I leave this option open because I can't anticipate your group or what direction the story has taken up to now. What the squad's purpose may be is less important than your purpose in throwing them at the players.

Raymond Chandler said that when he didn't know what to do next with Phillip Marlowe, a man with a gun walked in the room. Use the hit squad to wake the players up if they've gotten too complacent or if they think they've got everything figured out. You can use the squad for misdirection. As soon as they get hit, the players will start speculating who sent them. Use that speculation to your advantage. If they come up with better ideas than you've got planned, ditch your idea

MALMART UPDATE

DATA RETRIEVAL DEVICE (DRD)

Data Retrieval Devices allow someone to interface with a Tendril Access Processor and recover any data that might remain on the device. The device automatically works; there are no rolls required to actually use it. However, Tendril Access processors can store a vast amount of information. If a character is looking for specific information (like the call logs in this adventure), she needs to make an Investigation roll to find what she's looking for.

Cost: 500 credits, **Weight:** 1 lb.

and go with theirs. They'll be brainstorming, thinking things out loud, guessing as to who may have done it. They may come up with something far more clever than you or I could come up with. Use it!

You can also plant clues on the hit squad to either get them going in the right or wrong direction.

If the Company sent them, it's likely they did so to throw the heroes off track. If any characters check, they'll find call logs (forged) on one of the men's TAP. The data can be obtained in two ways. If the man is still breathing, the character can hack his TAP. Treat the hack as normal. If he's dead, the character must cut it out of the man's head (a Knowledge (Cyber Surgery) roll) and examine it with a Data Retrieval Device.

You may even want to use the squad to capture the players. See *Scene 8: Associates Way* for what happens to the heroes if they get captured.

Finally, if the heroes get injured (likely), and they contact Wallace, he knows a street doc (from the old days) that can get them straight. He'll even pay for it. "I don't care what it costs. Just get Lorna back."

🔌 Hit Squad (1 per hero)

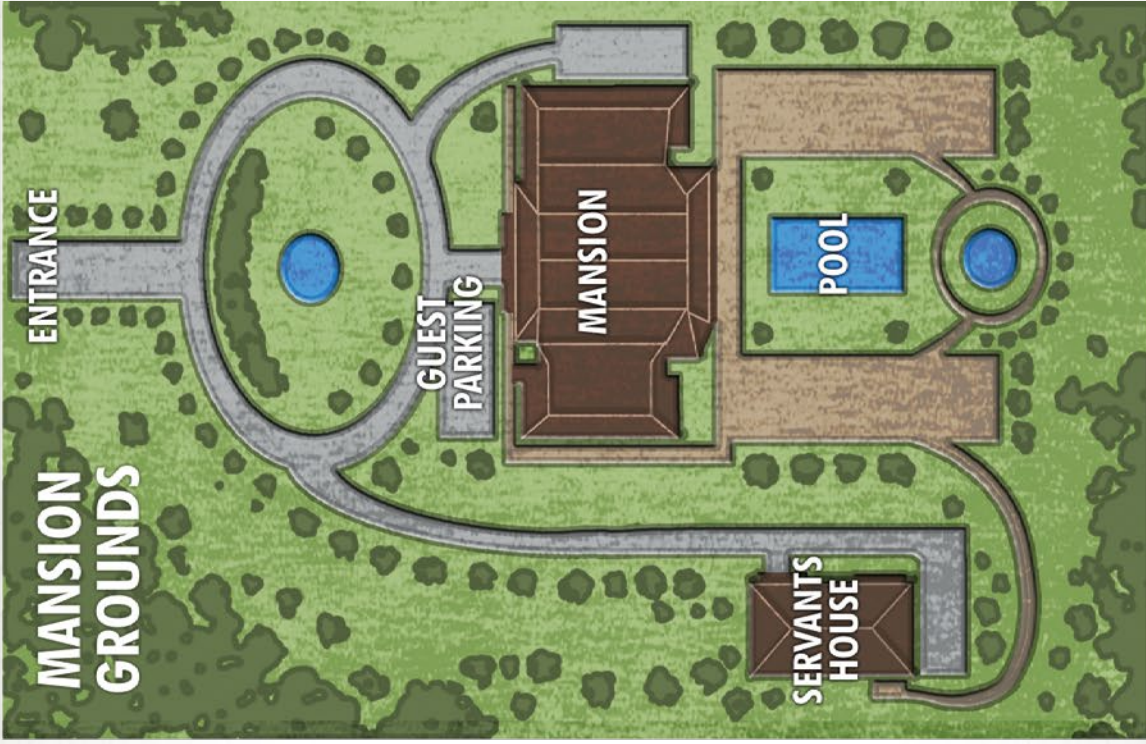
SCENE 7: DARK'S CASTLE

If the heroes go back to Dark's place, they'll find guards on the walls. He's paranoid — and rightly so. The heroes need to find a stealthy way in. A direct assault brings police. If the firefight gets big enough, it may even bring Federal forces in. That's something the heroes *don't* want.

(In modern games, players tend to resort to explosives to solve their problems. If they go this far, send in the Sector Cops. They'll go to prison, get locked away and forgotten. That's how I handle players who think they can just blow up buildings in the middle of a city and run away, hoping nobody finds out it was them. Of course, give them fair warning in advance. "Are you sure you want to blow up a building? You know, there may be consequences...")

Once inside, they can find Dark hiding in his bedroom — also known as The Vault. Getting through The Vault requires some work. He's got it sealed off with two feet of solid steel on every side (above and below). The heroes may be able to get through the air conditioning vents, but those are booby trapped with explosives. Hacking the lock is possible, but that's also trapped with killer viruses. Failure to get by the encryption causes more traps in the room outside The Vault.

If they get into The Vault, they'll find Dark armed to the teeth and out of his mind. He's loaded on seven different kinds of drugs and he's got military grade firearms. He also has a few women in the room with him. Think of the end of *Scarface* and you've got a good idea of what's waiting for the heroes.



DARK'S CASTLE

Taking Dark alive will be rough. He'd rather die by his own hand than get caught. But, if our heroes are crafty — and don't try for a forward assault — they may get their hands on him.

IF DARK KIDNAPPED JERICHO...

Dark kidnapped Jericho. He wanted her back and was willing to do anything to get her. He held her here in The Vault, loading her with drugs, trying to get her to love him. It didn't work. After the heroes visited him, Dark hired a private eye to shadow them. He's been watching them this whole time. See "Scene 9: The Shadow" for more on that.

Also, after the heroes visited him, he was approached by a "man in black" who knew everything Dark was up to. He said he was a representative of Dark's "silent partners" and they would only allow Dark to continue their relationship if he gave up Jericho. He had ten seconds to decide. It was the most agonizing ten seconds of Dark's life. He sincerely loves Lorna, in his own sick and twisted way, but loves himself more. He gave her up.

IF DARK DIDN'T KIDNAP JERICHO...

He's simply a paranoid mess who wants to kill himself... and take the rest of the world with him.

If they capture Dark and question him, he will tell them this much:

I loved her. I really did. I still do. I'm so fucked up. And she was holy. She kept me from going over the edge. Standing there, looking over, she always held me hand and pulled me back. She's beautiful. And I can't live without her. I don't want to. I want to fucking die. Just fucking die.

They took her. I know they did. The Company. They took her. She knew too much. She got it from me. I told it to her. How they're working. And she got more from that Sage prick, I know it. It's all over now. They're going to kill me. I don't care. I want to die.

If the heroes ask about The Company, he will tell them:

"The Company, man. The Company. They run everything. They own everything. The water you drink, the food you eat. They even know when you jerk off, man. They know what kind of tail you like to chase, they know what you read, they know what you're thinking. You can't make an enemy like that. Nobody can. You can't even make them an ally. All you can do is make yourself indispensable. Once you do that, they don't want to get rid of you. They view you as an asset."

He pauses, looking for a drink or a smoke.

"That's what I did. I made myself an asset. That way, at least I get to be part of the machine. 'Cause if you aren't part of the machine, you're part of the problem. And you know how the machine deals with problems?"

He puts two fingers against his head and "pulls" the trigger.

"That's how. And nobody knows. Nobody cares."

He slops down, like saying all that has taken a mountain off his shoulders.

"They took Lorna. They took her. Because she was a problem. And now..."

He chokes up, can barely speak.

"... now, she's gone. And there's no getting her back."

He looks at the heroes.

"Best you can hope for is to find the pieces, man. That's it. Stop looking now. Unless you want someone to rip your heart out of your chest, just give up. Because what's waitin' for you man... it's dark. Like 2:00 AM and not a star in the sky dark."

SCENE 8: ASSOCIATES WAY

If the heroes do some research (an Investigation roll will suffice), they discover there is no address 12421 Associates Way. However, 60640 is the GISP (Geographic Information and Structure Position) locator code in the Chicago sprawl, and there is a "Gowan & Associates Tower" in that zip code. This is the location of The Company.

Gowan & Associates is a cover: a high rent law firm. They meet clients under the auspice of giving legal advice, when in fact, they are giving their clients the tools they need to manipulate entire cultures.

The heroes may or may not be able to physically get to Chi town, but what they need from Gowan & Associates can be acquired through a quick hack. Thus, two approaches: real and virtual.

REAL APPROACH

Getting in to Gowan & Associates is not easy. They don't have security guarding the place; they have a small army. Your players will undoubtedly come up with clever ways on getting in to the building. Let them. The Company will allow them to get by the first level of security just to see who is trying to get in. If someone is cracking into the building, they want to know who and why. If they think the heroes are just trying to steal info from a law firm, they'll let them get away with whatever they want. But, if the heroes get deep enough, the Company will unleash hell.

The Company will fill the floor the heroes are on with carbon dioxide, flash bombs and sonic weaponry while flushing out all the oxygen. The building is air tight with sophisticated air conditioning systems, so they can fill a room with CO₂ in two seconds. All three of these defenses occur at once and are designed to knock the heroes out. These attacks should bypass conventional defenses. If those don't work, a few dozen heavily armed and armored guards will clean up the rest. The guards are wearing the proper gear to avoid the CO₂, flash bombs, and sonic weapons. The guards are armed with stun guns, tasers, and other incapacitating weapons. The Company wants information from the heroes.

Once they've been captured, the standard torture for information begins. The Company wants to know who the heroes are, why they are here and who else knows about them. The heroes are held in individual cells isolated from each other. There is no way to communicate with the others. Cyberware and other internal devices are compromised by microwave generators or white sound. Food gets delivered to them through small slots in the doors. Nobody speaks to them. There is no-one to tempt, seduce or bribe. They're locked in, and for good. The cells contain similar devices they

encountered in the building: CO₂, flash bombs, etc. If they get rowdy, they get knocked out.

Of course, your players will come up with a clever plan for escape. One that neither you nor I can anticipate. If they can't, I've got a way to get them out — and lead them into another adventure.

Once the Company knows everything they want to know, they knock out the heroes. Our fellows and ladies awake in a storage container. They're together. What equipment they have is up to you. Each of them has a message that will pop up immediately:

**WELCOME TO YOUR NEW LIVES
YOU BELONG TO US
DO AS YOU ARE TOLD OR THOSE YOU LOVE
WILL SUFFER AS YOU HAVE SUFFERED
THEN, YOU WILL DIE**

At this point, the heroes will probably try self-examination to find any bugs or other devices. As a matter of fact, each of them has a small thermal implant in their brains connected to a monitor. As soon as they discover the device, they get another message:

**TRY TO REMOVE THE IMPLANT, IT EXPLODES.
TRY TO BLOCK THE SIGNAL, IT EXPLODES.
TRY TO WARN YOUR "LOVED ONES," IT
EXPLODES.**

Your heroes then receive instructions for the next adventure. They've lost Jericho Rose. They're owned by the Company. They lose.

But hey, they wanted to play a cyberpunk adventure, right?

And there's always time for revenge. And who knows, maybe she's still alive and maybe they can find her before it's too late. And maybe they'll find a way to do it so the Company never knows.

Maybe.

VIRTUAL APPROACH

The virtual approach requires the heroes working through electronic means to get the information they want.

First, they have to get through the initial level of security. It isn't easy, but it's designed to ward off anyone looking for real data. They'll find lots of boring paperwork showing the Gowan & Associates' legal relationships with other law firms and corporations. However, a deeper look shows some illegal business: covering up insider trading, getting corporate officers out of legal trouble, etc.

All of this is a smoke screen designed to filter out the real dangers from the hacks. "Evidence" that goes nowhere. There's a second level that the heroes really want. At least, that's what they think. The second level is a trap. It's filled with viruses and other hazards to catch a hacker and burn out his brain.

The third level, the one the heroes want, is the Company level. The Company divided its Intranet into cells — like a conspiracy. Agents can only access their own private part of the Intranet. There is no way to access other cells without the right software, specifically designed for each agent. So, the

heroes can access one part of the Company's Intranet, but not all of it. They have no means to do so.

What they can get from breaking into the Company's Intranet is a connection to Johnny Dark. Lorna has access to Dark's Intranet account. The username is darkerthandark. It comes up automatically when you access the Intranet. The password is from Lorna's notes: dontrustdontrustdontrust.

Once in, they get a full breakdown of the Company's relationship with Dark. He's been instructed to use certain song structures and lyrics in his next release. As a producer, he's also supposed to include similar chords and lyrics in other artist's albums. This will create a "memetic resonance" among his audience, directing them subconsciously. One can assume the Company has similar deals with other agents.

This information can lead them back to Johnny Dark. Unfortunately, going back to Dark at this point requires a full scale assault. See *Scene 7: Dark's Castle*.

SCENE 9: THE CHAMELEON SHADOW

The private eye Dark hired to follow the heroes is Emma Bangs. She's small, adorable and looks nothing at all like a danger. Emma has a special outfit that allows her to switch colors, textures, etc. whenever she needs. One moment, she's wearing a black hoodie and green pants and the next she's wearing a red hoodie and blue pants. Under the hoodie she wears other clothes with identical properties: she's a little chameleon who can change whenever she wants.

Her hair has the same skill. Blonde, brunette, red-head. Whatever she needs. Length and texture are also options.

She's also geared up to record all around her from every angle. She can also focus her cyber-peepers on folks and run a lipreading program if she needs it.

THE CAMELON SHADOW (WC)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10(4); **Firewall:** 7; **Strain:** 8

Hindrances: Loyal, Stubborn

Edges: Chromed, Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Investigator

Cyberware: Advanced Subdermal Armor, Cyberlegs [Ligament Enhancement], Face Modulator, Advanced Muscle Augmentation

Gear: Private Dick Urban Trench (+2), AGA Thunderbolt (Range 12/24/48; Damage 2d8+1; Shots 15; AP 4, Semi-Auto), T-App Firewall 4th Dimension Security, T-APP Multitasker

FACE MODULATOR

Muscles and bones in the face and throat are replaced with synthetics self shaping polymers and a nanite weave. These modifications allow the user to change their facial appearance. Doing so takes a minute and requires a Smarts roll. The character is able to raise or lower their Charisma by one for each success and raise. The face modulator grants a +2 bonus to opposed rolls to see past the disguise if appearing as a specific person.

Face Modulators are restricted in most places, since it is able to defeat facial recognition programs. **Strain:** 2

Emma can also run the gamut between madonna and whore in a heart beat. She can be anything at any time. Whatever you need, she can be that.

Dark hired her to follow the heroes because she's the best. You want info, you get Bangs. Emma's been keeping tabs on them from inside cars, on top of roofs, balconies, fire escapes and just walking nearby.

If she gets caught, and it should be a very clever band of heroes who catches her, she can tell them that she's following them, but she won't say who hired her. "Gotta respect my job, man," she'll say, and she'll say it with either a knowing wink of her eye, a come hither purr or a Serious Cat frown. Whatever it takes to convince the heroes that a job is a job. Nothing personal, but you aren't getting anything out of me.

She won't take bribes. "If word got out I ratted on a client, I'd be cutting my own throat. No more jobs, no more money, no more Bangs."

Heroes can try to beat the information out of her... but then they wouldn't be heroes, would they?



ONYEKACHI SY

SCENE 10: BROKEN ROSE

At some point, the heroes get a phone call from an unknown number. There's nobody on the other side and the call disconnects. If they call back, they hear this:

This is Lorna. Leave a message. (beep)

The call is easy to trace: it's in a garbage dump. When the heroes arrive, after they've searched for a while, they find Lorna Jericho.

She's naked, wrapped in plastic and duct tape. She's still alive, but suffering from exposure and dehydration. Her head is shaved and shows signs of surgery. There's nothing left of her. Nothing worth saving.

Attached to the tape and plastic is a hand-written note with a single word.

"Hope."

Once they find her and read the note, they probably want to talk to Sage.

SCENE 11: CONFRONTING SAGE

Players are crafty creatures. Once they find Lorna, they'll probably come to two conclusions: 1) Sage sold out Jericho, or 2) Someone wants them to *think* Sage sold out Jericho. The answer to that dilemma, of course, is up to you.

But one thing is true: whether or not Sage sold her out does not change the fact that the Company did awful things to Lorna Jericho. Sage is just the tool they used to get her.

IF SAGE SOLD HER OUT...

All it takes is a little pressure to break him. He tearfully explains that the Company came to him and told him they would kill him if he didn't give up Jericho. He weeps. He loved her. He thought he could help her, but he's too much of a coward.

IF SAGE DIDN'T SELL HER OUT...

He's pissed.

You motherfuckers calling me a tool of the man? A ToM? You better get your shit straight. Of course you found her the way you did. You know how I knew? Because that's how it *always* happens, man. You motherfuckers led them right to me. And they heard what I said and used it to get you to come back at me. You lost track it if all. You were looking for Tachyon RES, right? Why you lookin' at me now? Because you're all motherfucking fools, that's why. The man got you looking at me when you should be looking at them. I'm done with you.

THE REST OF THE SCENE

The rest of the scene goes down depending on what your players decide. They may want to use violence. Sage is not a violent man; taking him down is easy. Taking him to the cops won't help. He has evidence that he was nowhere near where she was dropped. He was in his place, on video, making rants on his daily subnet radio show. The heroes have no real evidence against him and the cops are all on the take anyway, so they let him loose.

FOLLOW UP

However, a few days later, the heroes hear a story on the local news.

"Scorpio Sage, real name Onyekachi Sy, has been arrested for the attack on singer Lorna Jericho. Police say they found material in Sy's apartment suggesting the man was an obsessed fan."

So much for that.

If the players want to go after the Company for Jericho, see *Scene 8: Associates Way* for more information.

SCENE 11: MISTER BLACK

Finally, a visit from a representative of The Company. He wears a black suit, wears black shades and carries a gun. Obviously, the heroes want to kill him.

"You can do that," he says. "But there's another one just like me, waiting to take my place. You can tear off the branches, but the tree still survives."

Then, he looks at one of the heroes. "Besides, ever since I started monitoring your sister, I've been daydreaming about what tying her to a chair and cutting off her fingers, one at a time, would be like."

Mister Black is the heroes' new contact with The Company. When they want something, they send Mister Black.

Each of the heroes receives a steady income, a new apartment, transportation, etc. The Company believes in taking care of its employees.

BLACK AND SAGE

"Sage? He's a tool. A useful tool. He does as he's told. The signals he sends out are regarded, by most, as simply noise. Those who follow his voice are marginalized and weak. They can do nothing. We allow his voice to speak because he reinforces the truth: those who speak against us are cowards who will crack at the first sign of danger. Nobody believes him. Nobody important, anyway."

A ROSE IN THE RAIN: A LESS DARK ENDING

If you think losing Jericho is too dark for your players (and I'm sure there are GMs out there right now saying, "I would never do that!"), I completely understand. Each group is different. That's what makes writing an adventure for someone else's group difficult. I can really only write what I would do. I have no forward information. I don't know who your players are, what they like, what they don't like, etc. And so, on the chance that your players will break your arms and legs for losing Jericho, I offer this option.

You can have Jericho locked up anywhere in the city. You can drop clues leading to her whereabouts as you see fit. Once your players overcome The Hit, they'll start doing research. They'll investigate the IDs of the dead bodies and look for past employers. Let them do their searches. As soon as they come up with something clever, reward them with a link. For example...

Let's say that after The Hit, your players start researching the guys who hit them. One of your players says, "If he's a merc, he has a history. Who signs his checks?" They'll break into his bank account. That's when you give them Howson Industries. Howson Industries is really a shell organization for Gowan & Associates. But Howson has a warehouse on Rutgers Avenue that has received no goods in two years. Why would a warehouse receive no goods for two years? Well, because it's empty and holding experimental tech that's being used on Jericho right now, that's why.

Or, let's say your players are hacking Gowan & Associates. They find the same abandoned warehouse. No incoming or outgoing packages for two years.

Or, instead of killing the guys on The Hit, they interrogate them. They find out they got their orders, ammo and equipment from the warehouse.

Or, they are stationed at the warehouse and saw a girl there, hooked up to a machine.

You'll find all kinds of ways to put Jericho in your players' sights. They'll supply the opportunities; you just have to take them.

But even if the players rescue Jericho, they'll still get picked up by The Company. Being impressed with the heroes' skills, The Company wants them on the payroll. Again, this leads into a longer campaign of the heroes working for The Company while trying to find a way to overcome it.

You see it, you hear it. You never stop seeing it, you never stop hearing it. You wake up on Monday and you aren't you anymore. You're them.

PLAYER HANDOUTS

THE COMPANY FILE

MEMETIC WEAPONRY

14241 ASSOCIATE'S WAY

THEY TELL YOU HOW TO HOPE/THEY TELL
YOU HOW TO VOTE

THEY TELL YOU HOW TO FEAR/THEY TELL
YOU WHO TO FANTASIZE ABOUT

AND IT'S ALL YOUR IDEA

CONTRACTS WITH ADVERTISING. A
SHOE COMMERCIAL, A BAKING POWDER
COMMERCIAL, A MEDICINE COMMERCIAL
ALL HAVE IDENTICAL PHRASES AND
IMAGES. THESE AREN'T COMMERCIALS
FOR SHOES OR BAKING POWDER OR
MEDICINE. THEY'RE SIGNALS. WEAPONS.

DONTRUSTDONTRUSTDONTRUST

**WELCOME TO YOUR NEW
LIVES**

YOU BELONG TO US

**DO AS YOU ARE TOLD OR
THOSE YOU LOVE WILL
SUFFER AS YOU HAVE
SUFFERED**

THEN, YOU WILL DIE

**TRY TO REMOVE THE
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*You see it, you hear it.
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